



Everglades Coalition

PRESS RELEASE

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RELEASE **EVERGLADES COALITION SUPPORTS HISTORIC BUYOUT**
Land Acquisition Key to Restoration Projects; Coalition Looks to Governing Board for Next Steps

West Palm Beach, Fla.--In response to Governor Charlie Crist's historic announcement last week, the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District is convening today to discuss some of the details of a U.S. Sugar buyout. Governor Crist's announcement to purchase almost 300 square miles of the Everglades agricultural area creates exciting possibilities for the future of Everglades restoration, and the Coalition looks forward to working with the state of Florida to make this happen.

"Everglades restoration was in dire need of a visionary," said Mark Perry, state co-chair and Executive Director of the Florida Oceanographic Society. "Governor Crist is proving to be a champion for the Everglades."

At its 22nd Annual Conference, the Everglades Coalition laid out a series of essential priorities for Everglades restoration in 2007. These *Essentials for Everglades Restoration* identified nine restoration essentials and benchmarks that must be achieved if CERP is going to deliver benefits as it originally promised. Four of these Essentials addressed the critical need for more water storage and treatment to truly restore our River of Grass. With this purchase, we now have land needed to do this.

"More water must be sent south to Everglades National Park in order to protect Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries," said Sara Fain, National Co-Chair, The Everglades Coalition and Everglades Restoration Program Manager for the National Parks Conservation Association. "Water needs to be stored, cleaned, and delivered to the southern Everglades to reestablish the historic River of Grass."

"With this landmark acquisition, we now have the ability to make better decisions about how to complete the Restoration plan," said Perry.

"As the state of Florida continues to provide great leadership and initiative for the Everglades, we look to our federal partners for a sustained commitment to support and fund the plan that will restore the health and natural sheetflow of America's Everglades, said Fain. "Only with a strong federal-state partnership can we truly achieve our goals."

The Coalition says the health of the Everglades is not only vital to the environment, but also the economy and quality of life in South Florida. However, the group remains sympathetic to concerns in the community that this may have on the local economy. Given Crist's commitment to a six-year transition, the Coalition hopes that in the long run, this will be a win-win situation for all involved.

The Everglades Coalition is an alliance of 49 local, state and national conservation and environmental organizations dedicated to full restoration of the greater Everglades ecosystem, from the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes into Lake Okeechobee, through the "River of Grass", out to Florida Bay and the Keys. We represent millions of our members. For more information about the Everglades Coalition, please visit www.evergladescoalition.org.

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